DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 191 301 FL 011 599

AUTHOR	Lazaruk, Walter A.
TITLE	French as a Second Language: A Review of Recent Curriculum Development in Alberta.
INSTITUTION	Alberta Teachers Association, Edmonton. Modern Language Council.
PUB DATE	80
NOTE	18p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Barnett House, Alberta Teachers' Association, 11010 - 142 Street, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T5N 2R1 ($5.00 yearly subscription, $2.25 back issue).
JOURNAL CIT	Alberta Modern Language Journal; v18 n3 p6-22 Spr 1980
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Bilingual Education; Bilingualism; Communication Skills; Cultural Awareness; Educational Policy; Elementary Secondary Education; *French; *Language Planning; *Modern Language Curriculum; *Program Design; *Second Language Programs
IDENTIFIERS	*Canada (West)

ABSTRACT

This report covers six areas related to the development of French second language (FSL) programs in Alberta: (1) background information on recommendations of the Curriculum Policies Board, including the plan for curriculum revision; (2) characteristics of newly developed French programs; (3) premises underlying the program development, specifically, emphasis on communication skills, the four skills approach, understanding the structure of language, and attention to student-centered learning; (4) the organization of proposed programs in the Curriculum Guides, including rationale and goals, minimum expectancies, and objectives and content; (5) implications of the revised curriculum regarding student achievement, sequential learning, and in-service training for teachers; and (6) conditions necessary for sound second language programs and some questions dealing with second language instruction. Four appendices provide a chart of second language programs, descriptions of programs in FSL across Canada, program costs, and a summary of French programs and outcomes. (AMH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED191301

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Gaston R. Renaud
AMLJ Editor

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

French as a Second Language:

A Review of Recent Curriculum Development in Alberta

by Walter A. Lazaruk
Alberta Education

Background Information

Second languages are offered on an optional basis as part of the general education program in Alberta. Second languages in this context refer to languages other than English and include French, German, and Ukrainian. Second language programs refer to programs in which the language is taught as a school subject for purposes of developing communication skills and cultural understanding and appreciation.

Approximately 118,000 students are enrolled in second language programs, about 112,000 of whom are enrolled in French as a second language. This latter figure represents about 25% of the total school student population. In addition, approximately 10,000 students receive instruction in the French language under Section 150 (1)(a) of *The School Act*.

In November 1977, an overview of second languages was presented to the Curriculum Policies Board. At that time, two problem areas in current second language programs were highlighted:

1. *Because programs lack continuity, specifically from elementary through secondary levels, the same content is repeated at different levels of instruction. Students studying French at the elementary school level are placed in beginning courses at the junior school level and then again in beginning courses at the senior*

FL 011599

high school level. The need for developing continuous or sequential second language programs from the elementary through secondary school was emphasized.

2. *In terms of current practice in Canada, inadequate instructional time is provided for second language learning for attainment of effective results. The amount of time a student spends actively engaged in language learning largely determines his level of achievement. This point is supported by extensive research conducted in Canada and in many other countries in the world. Currently, the amount of instructional time in second languages and its organization do not lead to any significant achievement. The need for increased instructional time was stressed.*

At that meeting, three programs which lead to different levels of language proficiency were proposed as possible alternatives to existing programs for school jurisdictions interested in improving second language learning. (Appendix A)

In February 1978, a curriculum plan was presented to the Curriculum Policies Board for second languages. At that time the Board recommended that:

1. *Curricula be developed for a nine-year and a six-year program in French, and for six-year programs in German and Ukrainian.*

2. *Curricula for the current three-year program in French, German, and Ukrainian be revised.*

3. *Guidelines be prepared for the implementation of second language programs beginning in Grade 1.*

4. *Alberta Education provide school jurisdictions with information on the approximate costs (materials, equipment, teacher preparation) that jurisdictions would face in implementing each of the alternative programs (i.e. three-year, six-year, nine-year) in second languages.*

At this latter meeting, the Curriculum Policies Board requested that curricula for the junior high school portion of a six-year program and the elementary school portion of a nine-year program for French as a second language be presented to them in December, 1978. Program development in German and Ukrainian as second languages was to follow approval of the proposed French programs by the Curriculum Policies Board.

Furthermore, the Curriculum Policies Board stipulated that the choice of second language programs be made by each jurisdiction on the basis of community aspirations and availability of resources. In determining which second language program or programs to offer, school jurisdictions would need to consider at least the following factors:

(a) Community interest in second language learning;
(b) Availability of qualified teachers;
(c) Costs of staffing, materials, in-servicing.

To obtain the above information, some jurisdictions have conducted feasibility studies and community surveys.

Characteristics of Alternate French Programs

These French programs have been developed to reflect the characteristics approved in principle by the Curriculum Policies Board in February, 1978:

1. *A set of objectives which reflect the Goals of Basic Education along with a rationale to support the inclusion of second languages in a school program.*

2. *A specific level of language achievement and cultural understanding for each of the second language programs.*

3. *Specification of skills and knowledge for each grade level.*[4]

4. *Specification of minimum core content as well as elective components for enrichment and remediation.*

5. *Suggested teaching and learning strategies and evaluation procedures.*

---

[4] The Second Languages Coordinating Committee's position is that a specific sequence of objectives and content for second languages is arbitrary, and that requiring mastery of specific skills and concepts is more feasible on a divisional basis than on a grade by grade basis. Nevertheless, a grade by grade distribution of content and skills is outlined for articulation purposes.

6. *A recommendation for additional instructional time for the alternative six and nine-year programs, specifically that the minimum time allotments for second languages be 90 hours per year at the elementary school level and 100 hours per year at the junior high school level.*

7. *Specification of conditions for more effective implementation of second language programs, such as scheduling, teacher preparation and competence, and adequate instructional materials.*

The new programs are designed to increase the effectiveness of second language learning by improved articulation and increased instructional time. Increased instructional time and continuity from year to year are considered to be essential conditions for success with these programs.

Premises Underlying the Development of French Programs

1. Emphasis on communication skills

One of the underlying premises in this program is that the study of a language must be combined with opportunities to use the language. Knowledge of linguistic elements, vocabulary, sounds, word formation and grammar, although important, does not automatically lead to the ability to use the language.

In the proposed French programs, objectives and content for developing listening comprehension and speaking reflect a functional approach, and are chosen on the basis of major categories of language use:

- social conventions
- identification of persons and objects
- expressing actions
- expressing location
- expressing time
- expressing possession
- expressing permission and desire
- describing people and objects
- expressing emotions and attitudes and state of mind
- expressing cause and effect.

These language functions are considered to be examples of the principal categories of verbal communication. Research undertaken by the Council of Europe was adapted for this communication model.

2. Four skills approach

Another assumption is that various combinations of all skills are necessary for effective communication in a language. As students vary in their predisposition toward oral and visual means of learning, it is desirable to appeal to as many of the senses as possible and to avoid a single approach for all students. To illustrate, some students will learn through visual presentation what they are not able to grasp orally. Similarly, concepts learned in receptive skills (listening and reading) can be reinforced through productive skills (speaking and writing).

3. Emphasis on understanding the structure of language

Importance is accorded to assisting students in perceiving the structure of the language being learned by focusing on essential features of a skill or concept. Content is sequenced to enhance reference to meaning and situation. Explanations as to what is to be learned are included.

4. Attention to student-centered learning

Increased recognition should be given to the fact that students differ in aptitude, in talents, in socioeconomic background, in interests, in styles and rates of learning, and in various types of needs. The program attempts to meet some of these different needs and interests by offering a variety of content, and by suggesting a variety of teaching and learning strategies and evaluation procedures. An attempt is also made to adjust the objectives and content, and to select learning materials which correspond to the understanding and interest levels of students in each division.

Organization of Proposed Programs in the Curriculum Guides

1. Rationale and goals

The rationale and goals of the French program are specified on pages 1 and 3 respectively of the curriculum guides. Four points are stressed:

- development of communication skills;
- understanding the structure of language;
- cultural awareness;
- global interdependence and career preparation.

2. Minimum expectations for skill development and cultural understanding

Minimum expectations are specified for listening comprehension, speaking, reading, writing, and cultural understanding beginning on page 5. These minimum expectations are considered to be mandatory.

3. Objectives and content

The objectives and content for language, beginning on page 9, are selected on the basis of the major categories of language use identified earlier in this paper. Within each category, performance statements and linguistic content are specified. The performance statements indicate the minimum that students are expected to do in verbal communication. The linguistic content identifies the minimum language structures, sentence patterns, changes in word order and vocabulary that students are expected to acquire in order to understand and speak the French language. The content specified in the categories of language use, and the skills and concepts identified in the performance statements are considered to be core content.

Another section entitled "Suggested Vocabulary" lists content words based on everyday themes which are intended to complement the vocabulary found in the primary learning resources and to serve as an additional teacher resource. The suggested vocabulary is considered to be elective.

In addition, cultural themes and elective topics are presented to assist students in developing insights into the ways of life of French-speaking people as well as in acquiring knowledge about the people's achievements and contributions to civilization.

TO SUMMARIZE -

The core or mandatory components consist of:

- the minimum expectations for skill development and cultural understanding;
- the content specified in the categories of language arts;
- the skills and concepts identified in the performance statements;
- the major cultural themes;
- the study of the cultures of French-speaking Canadians.

The elective components consist of:

- suggested vocabulary;

- specific topics related to the major cultural themes;

- specific topics related to French communities in Canada.

4. Strategies

A brief statement on strategies is included on page 64 of the curriculum guide to reflect these assumptions:

- need for communication skills;
- four-skills approach;
- emphasis on understanding the structure of language;
- increased emphasis on cultural awareness;
- attention to student-centred learning.

A more detailed section on suggested strategies, classroom activities and exercises is found in the accompanying handbook.

5. Testing and evaluation

A brief section on evaluation including a definition, purposes of evaluation, and types of tests is presented in the curriculum guide. A more detailed section on suggested evaluation procedures and techniques is to be found in the accompanying handbook.

6. Learning resources

Primary learning resources which contain the major content for the program and which are recommended for use in Alberta schools are listed.

Implications of the Revised Curriculum

Firstly, it is hypothesized that the revised curricula will facilitate an improved level of achievement for students in a second language.

Secondly, it is suggested that the revised curricula will provide teachers with increased guidance in teaching a sequential program.

Thirdly, it is felt that teachers will require some in-service training to become familiar with the programs.

Also, teachers may find that in-service training may be necessary to upgrade language proficiency and second language methodology.

For jurisdictions, timetable changes may be required in order to implement a sequential program. Some jurisdictions may have to reschedule teachers in order to offer alternative French as a second language program. Also, jurisdictions may have to review their option program at the junior high school level in order to implement these alternative programs.

For Alberta Education, improved French as a second language programs would reflect initiatives across Canada.

Conclusion

It might be suggested that sound second language programs are dependent on the following conditions:

- adequate instruction time;
- effective teaching and learning strategies;
- adequate teacher preparation;
- good curricular and learning materials;
- positive administration and community attitudes;
- effective articulation of instruction;
- opportunities to come in contact with speakers of French.

A second language program can enjoy successful results if provision is made for the above conditions. Programs that fail most likely lack one or more of these prerequisites.

The new programs should be viewed as plans to assist teachers in offering improved programs in French as a second language. Teachers are invited to try the plan, adapt it to their local conditions, and inform Alberta Education about their experiences with the program and make suggestions for possible revisions and improvements.

Some Important Questions

1. How will second language programs fare in the climate of disappointment over the lack of success in the development of oral proficiency in the second language, and with the increased popularity of immersion programs?

2. What are our responsibilities for improving opportunities for English as a second language for the increasing number of immigrants who come to Canada and Alberta with minimal or no knowledge of English?

3. What are our responsibilities for improving opportunities for Spanish as a second language, for Italian, Hebrew, and other second languages?

4. What are our responsibilities for improving our proficiency in the language we teach and our teaching strategies?

5. How can we provide for continuous or sequential programs when second languages are considered to be elective courses at all levels?

6. How can we improve second language learning in schools when students who take a second language at the elementary and/or junior high school levels still end up in a "10" level course at the senior high level, that is, in courses for those beginning a language?

Appendix A

ORGANIZATION OF SECOND LANGUAGE PROGRAMS

GRADE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	TOTAL HOURS	EXPECTED PROFICIENCY & KNOWLEDGE (LANGUAGE & CULTURE)
							THREE-YEAR PROGRAMS			FR.10	FR.20	FR.30		
										GR.10	GR.20	GR.30	375	Minimum
										UK.10	UK.20	UK.30		
										125 HOURS PER YEAR				
				SIX-YEAR PROGRAMS			FR.7	FR.8	FR.9	FR.11	FR.21	FR.31	675 to 750	Basic
							GR.7	GR.8	GR.9	GR.11	GR.21	GR.31		
							UK.7	UK.8	UK.9	UK.11	UK.21	UK.31		
							100 TO 125 HOURS PER YEAR				125 HOURS PER YEAR			
		NINE-YEAR PROGRAM		FR.4	FR.5	FR.6	FR.7X	FR.8X	FR.9X	FR.11X	FR.21X	FR.31X	945 to 1020	Functional
				90 HOURS PER YEAR			100 TO 125 HOURS PER YEAR				125 HOURS PER YEAR			

Appendix B

FRENCH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE ACROSS CANADA 1978-79*

BRITISH COLUMBIA

1. French is offered on an optional basis beginning at kindergarten.
2. Before Grade 8, entry points vary across the province, with Grades 5,6, or 7 being the most common.
3. French is compulsory in Grade 8.
4. At the provincial level, a five-year sequential program is offered in French (Grades 8 to 12).

ALBERTA

1. French is taught at both the elementary and secondary school levels on an optional basis.
2. Entry points are generally Grade 4, Grade 7, and Grade 10.
3. At the provincial level, a three-year sequential program is offered in French (Grades 10 to 12) and a three-level program is offered on an optional basis beginning in Grade 7.

SASKATCHEWAN

1. French is taught from Kindergarten to Grade 12.
2. Two entry points are available for French as a second language: Grade 1 and Grade 7.
3. Each school jurisdiction must offer a second language in Division III (Grades 7 to 9).
4. Provincially, six-year sequential programs are available in French from Grades 1 to 6 and from Grades 7 to 12.

---

* Descriptions for each province have not been updated for 1979-1980.

MANITOBA

1. French is taught on an optional basis from Grades 1 to 12.

2. Entry points are at Kindergarten or Grade 1, Grade 5, Grade 7 and Grade 10.

3. Provincially, both six-year and three-year sequential programs are offered in French (Grades 7 to 12 and Grades 10 to 12).

ONTARIO

1. At the elementary school level, where French as a second language is offered, it is considered an integral part of the curriculum and consequently not optional for individual students.

2. Common entry points are Grade 1, Grade 4, Grade 7 and Grade 9.

3. A secondary school program in French begins in Grade 9.

4. Provincially, a five-year sequential program is offered in French (Grades 9 to 13).

QUEBEC

1. French as a second language is compulsory from the first to the eleventh year.

2. In schools where the language of instruction is French, English as a second language is compulsory from the fifth to the tenth year of schooling.

3. Provincially, an eleven-year sequential program is offered in French.

NEW BRUNSWICK

1. French is taught from Kindergarten to Grade 12.

2. French as a second language is compulsory from Grades 5 to 9.

3. Second language instruction is compulsory for students at the school board's entry point.

4. Provincially, an eight-year sequential program is offered in French (Grades 5 to 12).

NOVA SCOTIA

1. Each school jurisdiction must make French as a second language available for all students in Grades 7 to 12 inclusive.

2. French may be offered in Grades 4 to 6 at the option of the local school board.

3. Provincially, a six-year sequential program is offered in French (Grades 7 to 12).

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND

1. French is considered compulsory in Grades 7 to 9.

2. A current working paper proposes that French be optional in Grades 1 to 3 and compulsory from Grades 4 to 9.

3. Provincially, a six-year sequential program is offered (Grades 7 to 12).

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

1. French is compulsory in Grades 3 to 8 inclusive when it is offered in a school.

2. French is optional in Grades 9, 10, and 11.

3. Provincially, a nine-year sequential program is offered in French (Grades 3 to 11).

FRENCH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE ACROSS CANADA 1978-79*

SUMMARY

PROVINCE	MINIMUM SEQUENTIAL PROGRAM	COMPULSORY/ OPTIONAL
British Columbia	Five years (Grades 8 to 12)	Compulsory in Grade 8.
Alberta	Three years (Grades 10 to 12)	Optional at all levels.
Saskatchewan	Six years (Grades 7 to 12)	Compulsory second language from Grades 7 to 12.
Manitoba	Three years (Grades 10 to 12)	Optional at all levels.
Ontario	Five years (Grades 9 to 13)	Compulsory at the elementary school level.
Quebec	Eleven years (Grades 1 to 11)	Compulsory from the first to the eleventh year.
New Brunswick	Eight years (Grades 5 to 12)	Compulsory from Grades 5 to 9.
Nova Scotia	Six years (Grades 7 to 12)	Compulsory to offer French from Grades 7 to 12.
Prince Edward Island	Six years (Grades 7 to 12)	Compulsory from Grades 7 to 9.
Newfoundland and Labrador	Nine years (Grades 3 to 12)	Compulsory from Grades 3 to 8.

* Summary for each province has not been updated for 1979-80.

Appendix C

PROGRAM COSTS

It is difficult to determine accurately the costs of any subject in isolation from the costs of all subjects in a school program. A school program consists of the curriculum offered during available instructional time, and includes the organization of teachers and learning resources. The major element determining program costs is the salaries of teachers. Contributing factors to these costs are school enrolment, average class size, amount of planning time and scheduling. School program costs are determined by the decisions or policies made about teacher personnel and their assignments, classroom space, transportation, program location and learning resources. Identifiable costs associated with offering school subjects are summarized below:

A. IMPLEMENTATION COSTS*

1. Purchase of new learning resources and equipment;
2. In-service training;
3. Continuing program evaluation to determine weaknesses, success, student achievement.

B. MAINTENANCE COSTS

1. Replacement of learning resources and equipment;
2. Continuing review of curriculum and support materials;
3. Continuing in-service training;
4. Continuing program evaluation.

* The hiring of additional personnel will depend on school board policies and qualifications of the current teaching staff: teachers, teacher aides, supervisory staff.

Appendix D

SUMMARY OF FRENCH PROGRAMS AND PROGRAM OUTCOMES

3.1 Three-Year French Program (New Program)

The three-year program consists of a three-course sequence beginning at the senior high school level. It aims at providing students with a limited knowledge of the French language culture as well as some ability to use the French language.

Upon completion of 375 hours of instruction, the student will be able to:

3.1.1 understand comments, simple conversation, instructions and information based on sentence patterns and grammar concepts most common in the spoken form of the French language;

3.1.2 give and seek information on everyday topics, relate simple incidents, and make a description using the most common sentence patterns, grammar concepts and the vocabulary of the French language;

3.1.3 read simple directions, common public signs, menus, simple stories especially constructed for beginners in French, with or without a dictionary;

3.1.4 compose simple sentences, short paragraphs and simple letters in the French language;

3.1.5 discuss in English or describe in French, using simple expressions, the daily life and activities of the cultures of speakers of French.

3.2 Six-Year French Program (New Program)

The six-year program consists of a six-course sequence beginning in Grade 7. It prepares the students to communicate in a number of specific social situations and to understand identified themes of French culture.

Upon completion of at least 675 hours of instruction, the student will meet the expectations of the three-year French program, and in addition he will be able to:

3.2.1 understand conversation which approximates normal, careful speech in French;

3.2.2 participate in French conversations which deal with specific situations encountered in daily living without mistakes in grammar and vocabulary;

3.2.3 read with understanding material in which the French grammar and vocabulary have been simplified;

3.2.4 write anything that he can say in French with accurate spelling;

3.2.5 discuss in the French language at an elementary level some of the historical, social, and economic developments in the culture.

3.3 Nine-Year French Program (New Program)

The nine-year program consists of a nine-course sequence beginning in Grade 4. It prepares the student to communicate effectively in a greater variety of situations than a shorter sequence will permit.

The student will acquire considerable knowledge and understanding of speakers of the French language and of their cultures.

Upon completion of a least 945 hours of instruction, the student will meet the expectations of the six-year program, and in addition he will be able to:

3.3.1 understand spoken French language in a variety of situations representative of daily living;

3.3.2 participate with ease in French conversations in the majority of everyday social situations;

3.3.3 read with understanding unfamiliar material in French with the aid of a dictionary;

3.3.4 express in writing with reasonable ease his own ideas in French;

3.3.5 discuss in some depth cultural topics dealing with the culture of French-speaking people.